

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5082

As of January 26, 2015

Title: An act relating to providing for career and technical education opportunities for elementary school students.

Brief Description: Providing for career and technical education opportunities for elementary school students.

Sponsors: Senators McAuliffe, Litzow, Rolfes, McCoy, Billig, Conway, Hobbs, Kohl-Welles, Ranker and Fraser.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 1/19/15.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Matthew Lemon (786-7405)

Background: In 2010 the Legislature directed the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to convene a workgroup to develop a comprehensive plan to establish educational pathways from elementary education through postsecondary education to careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). The plan set a definition for STEM literacy and made a number of recommendations regarding recruiting and retaining STEM educators, creating STEM pathways to boost student success, and using STEM education to close the opportunity gap and better prepare students for careers and college.

Examples of other STEM K–12 education initiatives currently supported by the state include the following:

- the designation of a statewide STEM director within OSPI, a provision of funds to support career and technical education in STEM and professional development for teachers to implement STEM curricula;
- designating STEM "Lighthouse" schools to serve as examples of innovation and best practices;
- supporting a mathematics, engineering, and science achievement program run through state colleges and universities to encourage students in underrepresented groups to gain skills and explore careers in STEM; and
- grants for middle and high schools to implement advanced STEM curricula, such as Project Lead the Way.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Summary of Bill: Elementary Level Career and Technical Education Programs in STEM. OSPI is permitted to approve career and technical education programs in STEM fields in elementary schools in addition to its current ability to approve such programs in middle and high schools. OSPI is permitted to allocate grants to elementary schools to develop or upgrade high-demand career and technical education programs, on the same basis as grants may be allocated to middle and high schools for the same purpose.

STEM Education Start-Up Grants. OSPI must implement a grant program in the 2016–17 school year to pay for one-time start-up costs associated with offering K–12 STEM education programs developed by a nonprofit entity. Grants may be allocated to elementary, middle, or high schools, but priority must be given to schools that have 70 percent or more of their enrolled students participating in the federal free and reduced-lunch program. OSPI and the Education Research and Data Center must track student participation and long-term outcome data.

Appropriation: \$250,000.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: From 2008–18, over 1.5 million jobs in STEM fields in the United States will go unfilled. It is critical that Washington's students be well positioned to fill these STEM occupations in the future. The bill will do more to bring girls and underrepresented students into STEM fields by engaging them in their early educational careers. To remain competitive worldwide, the United States must focus on producing graduates prepared to fill STEM fields. Providing more STEM opportunities in early grades aligns with the state's workforce development plan, the High Skills, High Wages plan.

OTHER: OSPI supports the idea of more STEM in elementary schools, however there is already an issue with career and technical education (CTE) funding for middle and high schools. Materials, supplies, and operating cost allocations are increasing for basic education, but not for CTE. OSPI supports the grant program and expanding STEM opportunities for elementary school students, but not expanding CTE into elementary school. Expanding CTE into elementary school the way this bill contemplates would be an expansion of the definition of basic education. The bill could be improved by allowing state programs to claim grant funding on the same basis that national nonprofits are allowed.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator McAuliffe, prime sponsor; Shepherd Siegel, Project Lead the Way; Tim Knue, WA Assn. for CTE; Nova Gattman, Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board.

OTHER: Randy Dorn, Superintendent of Public Instruction.